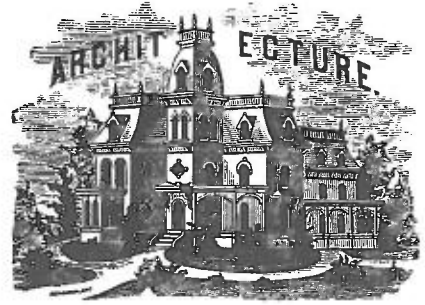


A Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine



Francis W. Chandler
1844-1926

Francis Ward Chandler, partner of Boston architect Edward C. Cabot, and Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was a leading member of Boston's architectural community. Known as a designer of fashionable Back Bay townhouses and as a leading proponent of academic training for architects, Chandler was also an avid yachtsman. His contribution to Maine's building heritage included designs for lifesaving stations and three stylized vernacular summer cottages on North Haven Island.

Born in Boston on September 30, 1844, the son of Samuel Ward Chandler, Francis graduated from Lancaster Academy in 1861 and was enrolled at Harvard when the Civil War began. After serving with the 43rd Massachusetts Volunteers for two years, Chandler entered the office of Ware & Van Brunt as a student in 1864. On August 2, 1866, he was hired as a draftsman by this important Boston firm, a position he shared with Robert Swain Peabody, who became a life-long friend. In September, 1867, Chandler sailed for Europe to enter the Daumet Atelier in Paris. There he shared rooms with Peabody and Charles F. McKim. The three young men studied architecture and toured France and Belgium together.



Figure 1. The Fox Island Thoroughfare with the Paralyso at the right, c. 1890 view (Courtesy of Barbara Lannon).



Figure 2. U.S. Lifesaving Station, Fletcher's Neck, Biddeford Pool, 1887 view (MHPC).

On August 2, 1869, Francis Chandler returned to work for Ware and Van Brunt. William R. Ware was then teaching at the architectural school he had established at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and he invited Chandler to serve as his assistant.¹

With this exceptional professional training, Francis Chandler established an office of his own in 1871 with his cousin, Theophilus P. Chandler, Jr. The two men "did a good deal of work for Peabody & Stearns" (which had been established in 1870). The partnership of the two cousins lasted until October, 1871, when Theophilus relocated to Philadelphia and Francis took William Pitt Preble Longfellow's position as Assistant Architect of the United States Treasury Department under Alfred B. Mullett. While working for Mullett, Chandler prepared a model design for a lifesaving station in 1873.² In 1875, after he resigned from the Treasury Department, Mullett requested more designs for lifesaving stations from Chandler.³ At this time there were two basic government designs, one of 1873 and a modified variation of that in 1875. Both were wood construction with Stick Style ornamental trim, and both signalled the government's departure from plain, utilitarian structures. Although surviving drawings are not signed, it can be presumed that both schemes are Chandler's work.⁴

A total of twenty-two lifesaving stations were built from the 1873 design. Five were in Maine: Quoddy Head, Cross Island, Browney's Island, White Head,

and Fletcher's Neck stations (Figure 2). These structures featured highly ornate decorative "stick-work" trim, including intricate railings for the roof deck observation platform. A common motif was the silhouette of a dolphin in the vergeboards. The modified variation of this design, dating from 1875, was less ornate and suggested influences of the newly fashionable Queen Anne style. Only one of this type has been documented as having been built in Maine, on Little Cranberry Island in 1879.⁵

In late 1874 Chandler received an invitation from Boston architect Edward C. Cabot to form a partnership, which he accepted. His resignation from the Treasury Department was tendered on December 12, 1874.⁶

Edward Cabot, one of Boston's elder statesmen architects, acquired a notable reputation upon winning the competition to design the Boston Athenaeum (with George M. Dexter) in 1845. The new firm of Cabot & Chandler became especially active in Boston's developing Back Bay where rows of elegant townhouses sprang up along spacious boulevards.⁷ At about the same time, Chandler assumed the duties of co-editor of the new *Architectural Sketch Book* with Henry Richards, which featured the work of the country's leading architects.⁸ Two more trips to Europe occurred in 1875 and 1882 (one with R. S. Peabody) before his marriage to Alice Daland in October, 1882.

Francis Chandler's first recorded trip to North Haven occurred with his wife-to-be on a yachting

voyage in August, 1882. At that time North Haven was a small fishing community which offered little in the way of industry or commerce to sustain the lives of its inhabitants. Its sheltered harbor, located opposite the north shore of Vinalhaven Island, is situated on a strait known as the Fox Island Thoroughfare. One account credits the establishment of a summer colony there to three Bostonians, Dr. Charles G. Weld, Tucker Daland, and Francis W. Chandler.⁹ To this list should be added others such as Ernest and Alfred Bowditch and J. Murray Howe. One of the earliest structures erected by these "rusticators" was Francis Chandler's "Paralyso", built during the winter of 1884-85 (Figures 1 & 3).

Chandler designed a structure that in materials, scale, and configuration conformed to the vernacular buildings in North Haven's harbor. The exterior is entirely shingled with a steeply pitched gable roof and a single large hipped roof dormer on the principal facade. An enclosed exterior staircase on the east side maintains the steep salt-box pitch of the roof line on the rear. With its plain porch posts and railing and random-sized granite stone supports, the building stands at the water's edge with its face to the weather and no intricate architectural detail requiring special care to maintain. The name "Paralyso" derived from its original use, that of a male refuge for drinking and smoking where one might become "paralyzed". The guest register for the Paralyso records numerous visitors over the years. Included were such Boston architects as Alexander W. Longfellow, William Y. Peters, Arthur W. Rice, and Ed-

mund M. Wheelwright. An addition to the rear of the building, now a private cottage, was made in 1913.

With the Paralyso serving as a kind of clubhouse, there was a need for a conventional summer cottage for the Chandler family, which included a daughter, Helen, born in 1886 and a son, Henry Daland, born in 1889. In 1887 Francis Chandler erected the "Palace" on the hill above the Paralyso (Figure 4). The same vernacular character was employed, although in this instance the clapboarded residences on the island served as the inspiration rather than shingled wharf structures. Thus the Palace is somewhat more formal with its clapboard siding and porch brackets in the form of ship's knees. Nevertheless, the principal concern was clearly to create a building which blended with the traditional architecture of the island. This approach was at the time quite unusual. The majority of Shingle Style cottages of the 1880s erected elsewhere on the Maine coast were far grander and more pretentious. In contrast, Chandler's house had more in common with the first summer cottage at Bar Harbor built in 1868 for Alphonse Hardy. As with the Paralyso, Chandler made additions to the Palace, a large wing being added in 1916.

Both of these structures were built while Chandler was in partnership with Edward Cabot. The only Maine project by the firm which has been identified is the Porcupine Hotel in Bar Harbor, erected in 1887.¹⁰ It is not known if Chandler participated in the design of this Shingle Style structure, which is no longer standing.

In 1888 Francis Chandler withdrew from private



Figure 3. The Paralyso, North Haven, c. 1890 view (Courtesy of Barbara Lannon).



Figure 4. The Palace, North Haven, c. 1890 view (Courtesy of Barbara Lannon).

practice to head the Department of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Chandler had first demonstrated an interest in teaching by his association with William R. Ware from 1868 to 1870. In assuming this new position, his contribution to the development of the School of Architecture became considerable. According to one account, when Professor Chandler joined the faculty, M.I.T.'s School of Architecture was principally attracting students interested in gaining minimal training of two years or less before seeking employment:

Of the seventy-five students registered, only five were working for the degree of the Institute, the majority being attracted by a two-year partial course devoted almost entirely to design and freehand drawing. One of his first acts was to abolish the partial course under the conviction that two years was far too short a time in which to give any adequate preparation for a serious professional career. He made the students see that architecture meant very much more than skill in drafting, very much more than mere technical ability. To that must be added something of the imagination of the artist, something of the science of the engineer, and as a background to it all there must be intelligent appreciation of the monuments of the past and the conditions under which they were developed.¹¹

The Chandler family continued to summer at North Haven. A third child, Ethel, was born in 1890. The number of guests who visited was evidently sufficient to warrant the construction of a second cottage. Known as the "Anchorage", this house was completed in the summer of 1897 on the hill between the Paralyso and the Palace.¹² Like the earlier

dwelling, it was not ostentatious and, although larger than the Palace, maintained a vernacular character. The additional space allowed the family to entertain such guests as Robert and Annie Peabody, who stopped by while yachting along the Maine coast (Figures 5 & 6).

Chandler's last direct involvement with Maine architecture may have been in 1911, when he retired from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. That year a great fire destroyed much of Bangor's commercial district, and a competition was held to design a new public library. Professor Chandler was hired as an advisor to the Bangor Public Library's Board of Trustees.¹³ Four criteria were laid out in a request for proposals sent to architects. Professor Chandler then selected qualified competitors from the responses received. "Conditions of Competition" were established for the following firms which had been invited to compete: Wilfred E. Mansur (Bangor), Fred L. Savage (Bar Harbor), Coombs Brothers (Lewiston), G. Henri Desmond (Portland), Austin W. Pease (Portland), McLean & Wright (Boston), and Peabody & Stearns (Boston). Each submission was numbered with the names of the firms kept secret by Chandler, who inspected each proposal to eliminate any that were not in strict conformance with the rules of the competition. It must have pleased him when the Board of Trustees selected Peabody & Stearns as the winners of the competition.

North Haven's development as a summer colony continued into the 1920s with a number of large cot-

tages being constructed on both sides of the Fox Island Thoroughfare. Although these homes were not equivalent to the grand mansions on Mount Desert, many were far more substantial than the Chandler cottages. Francis Chandler's son Daland also became a practicing architect and designed several buildings on both sides of the Thoroughfare. Daland's work generally conformed to the tradition established by his father. Francis Chandler continued to summer at North Haven until the end of his life, for it was there that he died on September 8, 1926.

Roger G. Reed

NOTES

- ¹ The principal source for Chandler's career are his autobiographical note-cards which record important events in his life. Included are itineraries for his trips with Peabody and McKim. These cards are in possession of his granddaughter, Barbara Lannon, who provided considerable assistance in the preparation of this article. Other important sources include: "Resolution of the Faculty, October 20, 1926, Francis Ward Chandler", copy of text in the M.I.T. Museum; obituaries in the *Boston Transcript*, September 9, 1926; *The American Architect*, Vol. 130, September 20, 1926, p. 16; "Chandler, Francis Ward", in *Who's Who in New England*, Albert N. Marquis, editor, Chicago, 1909, p. 201.
- ² "Maine Lifesaving Stations, Descriptive and Historical Overview", report by Eugene Wick York, for the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, December, 1987, p. 10.
- ³ Chandler, autobiographical note cards (see Note 1).
- ⁴ York, "Maine Lifesaving Stations", *op cit.*, pp. 9-11.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ Chandler, autobiographical note cards (see Note 1).
- ⁷ Bainbridge Bunting, *The Houses of Boston's Back Bay*, Cambridge, 1967.
- ⁸ Henry Richards, *Ninety Years On*, Gardiner, Maine, 1940, p. 316, cited in "Henry Richards", *A Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine*, Vol. 1, No. 7.
- ⁹ Lillie S. Bousfield, *Our Island Town*, Bar Harbor, 1941, p. 40.
- ¹⁰ *Lewiston Evening Journal*, June 7, 1887.
- ¹¹ "Resolution of the Faculty, October 20, 1926, Francis Ward Chandler", cited in Note 1.
- ¹² *Industrial Journal*, Bangor, March 12, April 9, April 23, 1897.
- ¹³ Letters and documents from this competition survived from the office of Fred L. Savage and are now at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. In 1905 Professor Chandler was asked to advise on the selection of a design for the new library at the University of Maine at Orono. In this instance, Chandler was requested to recommend a specific firm's plan. His suggestion to accept the proposal of Brainerd & Leeds, Architects, was adopted. *History of the Maine State College at the University of Maine* by Merritt C. Fernald, Orono, 1916, pp. 237-238.



Figure 5. Mr. and Mrs. Robert S. Peabody, left and right, visiting Francis W. Chandler and his son and daughter, center, on the porch of the Anchorage, North Haven, c. 1900 (Courtesy of Barbara Lannon).

KNOWN COMMISSIONS IN MAINE BY FRANCIS W. CHANDLER

The Paralyso, North Haven, 1884-85, addition in 1913, extant.
The Palace, North Haven, 1887, addition in 1916, extant.
The Anchorage, North Haven, 1897, extant.

The following lifesaving stations were built in Maine following designs attributed to Chandler:

- U.S. Lifesaving Station, Browney's Island, 1873, Destroyed.
- U.S. Lifesaving Station, Fletcher's Neck, 1873, Extant.
- U.S. Lifesaving Station, Quoddy Head, 1873, Destroyed.
- U.S. Lifesaving Station, White Head, 1873, Extant.
- U.S. Lifesaving Station, Cross Island, 1874, Extant.
- U.S. Lifesaving Station, Little Cranberry Island, 1879, Extant.



Figure 6. The three Chandler Cottages on North Haven, The Paralyso, The Anchorage, and The Palace, c. 1900 view (Courtesy of Barbara Lannon).

Photograph of Francis W. Chandler
Courtesy of The MIT Museum

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